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SUBJECT: CZECH MOD ASKS ABOUT SUPERSONICS, C-130, AND L-159

Classified By: Charge Mary Thompson-Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) On October 20, 2009, Deputy Minister of Defense for Foreign Affairs Jan Fulik requested a meeting with the Charge d'Affaires. Fulik will represent the MoD during Prime Minister Fischer's meeting with Vice President Biden on October 23, because Minister Bartak will be in Bratislava for the NATO defense ministerial. Fulik,s first and foremost concern was to confirm whether there is any substance to speculation in the local media about the Vice President,s intent to raise the issue of supersonic fighter acquisition during his visit. He simply wanted to "avoid surprises" and ensure that the Prime Minister is fully briefed. After explaining the Embassy,s role in the interagency process of formulating the agenda for a high-level visit, we assured Fulik that supersonic fighters were not likely to be a subject for discussion.

¶2. (C) Fulik's two additional points were also related to aircraft sales: obtaining C-130s from the U.S. and selling L-159s to Afghanistan. In the first instance, Fulik reiterated the MoD's unofficially stated position that the USD 111 million price tag for excess defense article C-130s is too high, and he expressed the hope that the USG will reduce the price. In response, we are reminding the Czechs that they must formally decline the pricing and availability offer currently on the table. Fulik went on to claim that Lockheed has offered the MoD one C-130J "for free," along with a second C-130J at a "favorable price," though he emphasized that the Czechs are not interested in a deal outside the framework of government-to-government sales. (Note: DATT spoke to the local Lockheed rep, and he said this is related to a 2008 meeting between former USDP Edelman and then-First Deputy Minister of Defense Bartak. Bartak supposedly asked at the time whether the USG could purchase a second C-130J for the Czechs if they purchased the first one on their own from Lockheed. End Note.)

¶3. (C) Finally, Fulik communicated the MoD's eagerness to know where things stand with the potential sale of the L-159 to the Afghan Air Force, highlighting the Czechs' commitment to following the U.S. lead in this matter rather than taking a direct approach with the Afghans and potentially annoying Washington in the process. Post is obtaining a point of contact within DoD with whom the Czechs can learn more about the progress of the ongoing evaluation of their offer.
Thompson-Jones